

Department of Correction

Testimony of Leo C. Arnone, Commissioner

Judiciary Committee

*Raised Bill No. 6345, An Act Concerning Disclosure of Information to a Parent or Guardian of a Youthful Offender in the Custody of the Department of Correction*

February 23, 2011

Good afternoon, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Leo Arnone, Commissioner of the Department of Correction (DOC). I am here this afternoon to speak in support of Raised Bill No. 6345, *An Act Concerning Disclosure of Information to a Parent or Legal Guardian of a Youthful Offender in the Custody of the Department of Correction*.

One of the unintended consequences of the law that requires records or other information of youth to be confidential is the fact that the DOC, as the agency that has custody of that offender, cannot disclose information about the offender's status. Raised Bill No. 6345 would allow the DOC to provide information about those offenders in the DOC's custody under the youthful offender statute to an inmate's parent or legal guardian. Currently law prohibits the DOC from disclosing information about the status of a youth offender. The DOC averages between three to six requests each month from a parent or guardian who calls to ask if their child is in the custody of the DOC only to have the agency put in a position of not being able to easily provide the information. A parent or legal guardian should have the right to know if their child is in the custody of the DOC to facilitate the bond process and/or arrange for legal representation. Additionally, disclosure of information to parents who receive federal or state assistance, i.e., Food Stamps, Section 8, about the status of the child provides documentation that confirms whether the child is no longer living in the home or has returned.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this matter.